

Coming
soon to a
boss near
you



AUTONOMOUS WORKERS UNION



Issue 1

May 2006

Contents

A.W.U. News

AWU News

ARC Cafe

Burger King

Subway

Union News

Clean Start

Hey! Hey! Super Size My Pay

France

Australia

Features

May Day: Histories,
Meanings, Potential
From Bad to Worse: Fast
food workers in Aotearoa
What Is The A.W.U?

Arc Cafe

The new collective agreement is being finalised and is yet to be ratified and signed off. Any questions, see Jamie or Billy.

Negotiations

Burger King

We have balloted members for the purposes of applying to become a third party to the Unite-Restaurant Brands collective agreement. The results of the balloting process should be known soon. We have been liaising with Unite organiser John Minto and await a significant reply.

Subway

Due to the owner of the Dunedin/Southland stores being on holiday, negotiations will not be starting again till June. Unfortunately this is an unavoidable situation. This is an excellent time to increase membership at Subway Otago and get a better delegate structure in place before the negotiations proceed again. The current negotiating team consists of Eva and Jackie at George Street, plus Billy and Malcolm, union delegates/organisers.

Clean Start Campaign

The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union launched the Clean Start - Fair Deal for Cleaners campaign.

Property Industry must listen

"We work hard and in return we want decent jobs and pay to support our families. We are sick of being ignored and invisible."

"It's time the property industry started listening to us - we want respect, we want a fair deal and we will fight to be heard," said Rakchanok Sothanaphasian an Australian cleaner said.

In Australia these workers were set to be the first victims of Workchoices. They stand to lose up to 30% of their income - despite the fact that they earn on average far less than a poverty line income.

Meetings

Wednesday Evenings

6:30_{pm}

See mailing list for location

Disclaimer

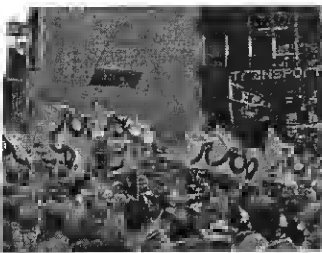
This new sletter is an unofficial publication prepared by members of the A.W.U. The articles represent the opinions of their authors and not the A.W.U as a whole.



Australian Workers Under Attack

On December the 2nd, 2005 the Australian senate passed the "WorkChoices" amendments to Australian industrial relations law. The changes to the law came into effect March this year.

The most significant change to the law was the removal of protection from unfair dismissal to workers in companies with fewer than 101 employees or where dismissal is for "a bona fide operational reason". This effectively removes protection from unfair dismissal for millions of workers.



Trade union supporters rally at Federation Square in Melbourne.

Supersize My Pay

SuperSizeMyPay.com is reporting that Unite Union has successfully negotiated a collective agreement for K.F.C., Pizza Hut and Starbucks workers.

Youth rates are to be phased out [sic] but all workers under 18 are to be placed on 90% of the adult wage effective immediately.

The main features are:

- * Basic rate is increased 7.9%.
 - * Supervisors and team trainers an extra \$0.50 an hour.
 - * Tea brakes go from 10 to 15 minutes.
 - * Additional hours that come available will be offered to current employees before new staff are hired.
 - * Union members have there membership fees paid by the employer (every three months)
- (The chickens were not available to comment)

See: <http://supersizemypay.com/files/restaurant%20brands%20newsletler.pdf>

Sky City Bosses Muzzle Union

Sky City Auckland management plans to prevent union access to a union-only notice board in reaction to recent notices posted.

"This is a straight-forward attack on our right to communicate" Said SFWU Delegate Peter Milne.

Sky City management has objected to answers given by Sky City CEO Evan Davies to union members' questions at a recent meeting with staff being posted on the notice board.

According to union members Davies commented that casino staff should go to Australia if they want to be paid as well as Australian staff. He added that he would rather close Sky City Hamilton than pay the workers at Auckland rates.

<http://www.sfwu.org.nz/news.asp?pageID=2145822798>
& RefID=2141732074 24 April 2006

The Wayne Mapp 90 day probationary period bill

National Party MP, Wayne Mapp has succeeded in getting his bill through its first reading. If this legislation is passed then an employer can dismiss a new employee within the first 90 days of their employment without giving any reason! This flagrantly disregards our human rights, contradicts the Employment Relations Act 2000 and gives bosses the green light to fire anyone who sticks up for their rights at work and joins a union.

The A.W.U. tully intends to oppose this bill in as many ways as possible. Watch the union e-mail list and this space for further details on the fight back campaign.

Starbucks

Two Starbucks stores in Auckland were closed in November last year for two hours after a lightening strike by Starbucks workers.

A crowd of about 100 people gathered to send a message to Starbucks and other fast-food and cafe outlets to give their workers a fair deal. Starbucks workers at 220 Queen St and K'Rd were taking part in the next stage of industrial action in the SuperSizeMyPay.Com campaign.



Internationally Starbucks has low union representation, with only 300 union members out of 80,000 workers globally. One third of these union members are in New Zealand. Worldwide, this is the first time a Union has picketed Starbucks.

See: <http://supersizemypay.com/>

Reprieve for French



Jacques Chirac

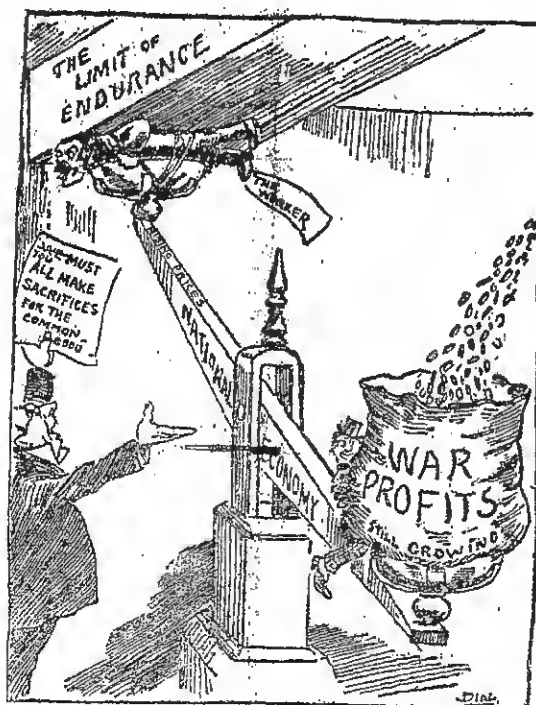
French President Jacques Chirac has announced that the new youth job law that has fueled protests for the past few weeks is to be replaced by other measures to attack unemployment amongst young adults.

Students and unions protested the new law, which would have given employers the freedom to fire youth workers under the age of 26 without reason during a two-year "trial period". The prospect had sparked somewhat violent protests across the country in the past two months.

Union leaders had given government officials until Easter to withdraw the existing law or face yet another general strike.

May Day: Histories, Meanings, Potential

The Haymarket Anarchists: Albert R. Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Louis Lingg, Samuel Fielden, Michael Schwab, and Oscar Neebe. These may be names that you do not recognise but their struggle for a better world and their eventual martyrdom is part of your history if you belong to the vast majority of humanity that must sell their labour-power simply to survive. They lived in the latter part of the nineteenth century when a vast struggle between the power of labour and capital was being waged across the industrialised world. This struggle is still being waged, indeed on an even grander scale. More and more of the world is being proletarianised as Capital cuts the world up with a finer and finer tooth-comb. At the end of the 1980s, after a decade of Margaret Thatcher's politics of "There Is No Alternative" and the fall of the bureaucratic so-called socialist states of Eastern Europe, Capitalism declared itself triumphant. No other form of society could be conceived of. Thatcher famously declared that there was NO SUCH THING as society; only a mass of self-interested individuals competing for the worlds' immense resources. Somehow, a small section of the worlds' population managed to 'compete' better than anyone else and gained the lion's share. Then as the 1990s wore on the heirs of Parsons, Spies, et al, became restless. With the protest against the WTO at Seattle a new anti-capitalist movement sprang up, a new society constituting itself within the shell of the old. The resurgence of people who believe that there IS an alternative to global capitalism is now part of history, a living reproof to those who cynically exploit the worlds' people and resources. The history of May Day is a history of the celebration of all that is free and life-giving in the world. It celebrates working peoples' resistance to capitalism and their desire to overcome their exploitation and gain control of their own lives. To cease to WORK and to start to LIVE. That is one of the meanings and potentials contained within May Day. A society that overcame capitalism would integrate labour into life, a life no longer subordinated to profit.



HOW IT IS DONE

—British "Railway Review."

Maroiland Worker
4 July 1917

May Day started as a pagan celebration of the fruits of the forests. As Peter Linebaugh wrote, "Within the woodland ecology our ancestors didn't have to work the graveyard shift, or to deal with flexitime, or work from Nine to Five." May Day celebrated the start of spring in the Northern hemisphere, a day of festivities, drinking and dancing, and certainly not work! With the onset of capitalist accumulation the authorities of the day cracked down on such 'debauchery'. Work for the master was to become the order of the day. In Britain an act of parliament of 1550 ordered the destruction of maypoles and the outlawing of games. The enclosure of the common lands by the nobility, which deprived the peasants of their means of subsistence (for example, it prevented them gathering free firewood) drove them into the towns to become wage labourers. Such is the prehistory of capitalism. By the 18th and 19th Centuries wage-workers were starting to fight back forming 'combinations', the early name given to trade unions. A long struggle brought gradual improvements in pay and conditions and by the 1880s a strong movement had begun to push for the 8 hour day. In Aotearoa, where British wage labourers came thinking they were escaping from under the thumb of Capital, an eight hour movement was inaugurated in 1840. An English carpenter named Sam Parnell declared he would work no longer than 8 hours in a day. The merchant who was hiring him became indignant but was

May Day...

...from page 3

forced to accept Parnell's terms. Parnell later became a figurehead of the eight-hour movement here. In Dunedin, in 1848 the Otago Association promised working-men an eight hour day but Captain Cargill, the local agent of the New Zealand Company, tried to renege on the deal. The workers refused to work over 8 hours without a reduction in wages and the Otago Association was forced to back down. The workers were gradually undermined with time and by 1882 the Otago Trades Council, the strongest labour body in the country at that time, was again calling for an eight hour day! More than 1500 people packed the Princess Theatre in Dunedin to hear the speakers. The movement here was part of the movement internationally.

In Memory of the Paris Commune
(Born March 18, 1871; died in June of the same year.)



THE COMMUNE

The labour uprising in Chicago forms the basis of the modern meaning of May Day, the class struggle and the celebration of international labour solidarity. In Chicago, Illinois, on May 4th 1886, a demonstration protesting police brutality against strikers (strikers were shot at, killing some and injuring others), was charged by police. In the ensuing chaos an unknown person threw dynamite into the crowd. The bomber was never found but the state scapegoated the 8 anarchists listed at the start of this article. Four were later executed, and two more died in prison, one committing suicide. Six years later the new governor of the state of Illinois released the remaining two after declaring their innocence. The 1884 convention of the Federation of Organised Trades and Labor Unions of the U.S. and Canada resolved to make eight hours a legal day of labour from May 1st 1886. The eight anarchists of Chicago became known as the Haymarket Martyrs. Other labour organisations throughout the world seized on May 1st as a day to protest and to celebrate their resistance to capitalism. However, in New Zealand, labour organisations decided to hold a labour day in October. This became law in 1899. The first Labour Days were well attended but soon became drained of their union content. Nowadays Labour Day is just another holiday, its significance lost on all but a few. The 'Industrial Unionist' the NZ paper of the Industrial Workers of the World (the I.W.W.) declared in 1913 that Labour Day was, "the bosses' labour day." We in the A.W.U. agree, which is why we celebrate on May First.

In Europe May Day became huge. In 1890, the rally in Hyde Park in London drew 300,000 people. In 1891, all of France was shocked by the unprovoked shooting of demonstrating workers. This set off 3 years of intense working class struggle culminating, in July 1893, in more than a week of student riots that then merged with the struggles of workers with the state and the bosses, prefiguring the revolutionary events of May 68, and today's struggle by the French people against the imposition of unjust employment laws. During World War One immense gatherings on May Day opposed the mass slaughter in the trenches of the French, British, and German working classes. In Glasgow on May Day 1917, 80,000 marched against capitalism and the war, with a quarter of a million lining the streets to cheer them on. The next year 100,000 Glasgow workers struck work to march in the procession on Wednesday May 1st defying the authorities' attempts to make them hold it on a Sunday! Across the world and here in Aotearoa, May Day is undergoing a regeneration. With the acceleration of capitalist globalisation, May Day is becoming truly global. "Carnivals Against Capitalism" have been organised and co-ordinated around the world with activities happening in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch in recent years. Instead of the demonised acts of senseless violence portrayed by the media, these protests are really struggles for peace, for without an end to the capitalist system, without an end to ceaseless expansion and an end to the ceaseless competition for and accumulation of the worlds' resources as capital, there can never be any real peace. Collectively we can always assert against the cynics, the apathetic, the naysayers, and, most importantly, the powerful, "ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE!"

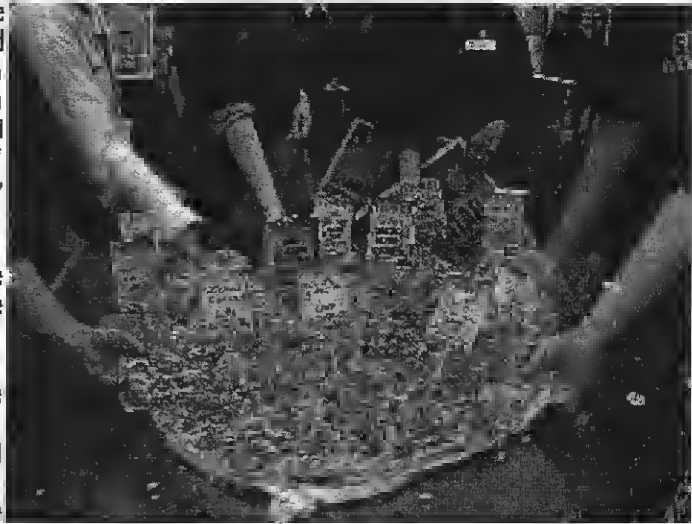
From Bad to Worse

How Workers in the fast food industry came to be amongst the most exploited workers in New Zealand

The situation for workers in New Zealand's fast-food industry hasn't always been as dire as it is today, people were once paid something close to a living wage, there was no such thing as youth rates, workers largely had access to union representation if they were being unfairly treated at work, and workers were paid extra for working nights, weekends and public holidays.

In the 1980s a group of unions called the Service Workers Federation of Aotearoa (SWF) negotiated working conditions on behalf of workers involved in the fast food industry. Through this organisation workers were guarded against the greed of profit hungry fast-food companies. For example, in 1987 the SWF was able to defeat an attempt by McDonald's to introduce youth rates.

However this was all to change in 1991 the National Government, with the backing of large business organisations such as the New Zealand Business Round Table and the New Zealand Employers Federation, brought into law, the Employment Contracts Act (ECA). The ECA represented some of the most anti-union law that New Zealand has seen in its history. A Union representative could not even enter a workplace without the permission of an employer, and so union attempts at recruitment became pointless. This caused a massive collapse in union membership amongst fast-food workers and by the



Despite the pouring rain, striking Pizza Hut workers served up pieces of a giant pizza for a fair slice of the multinational brand's profits and to raise awareness of the disproportionate number of migrant workers living on minimum wage in New Zealand.

www.supersizemypay.com



K.F.C. Workers on strike in Whangerei
www.supersizemypay.com

end of the 1990s only 5-10 percent of workers in the fast-food industry were represented by a union.

The effect of this on working conditions in the fast-food sector is clear to see. By 1995, food retail workers were the lowest paid group in any sector, earning an average of just \$303 a week (for 40 hours work). They were also the group to receive the lowest pay increases with just 0.3% per year. The effect of the ECA on fast-food workers can be further seen when we consider that in the 1980s the average worker in the fast-food industry was paid \$12.75 an hour in 2005 currency. Today this average sits at around the \$10 mark, meaning that in the last 20 years New Zealand's fast-food workers have taken a pay cut of nearly \$3 per hour or \$120 per 40 hour week.

Fortunately fast-food workers don't have to accept this situation. The tide is turning and the labour government's new legislation (Employment Relations Act) has allowed new opportunities for fast-food workers to organise for fairer pay and working conditions. Fast-Food workers in New Zealand are now fighting back against some of the largest corporations on earth, and what is more, they are winning.

Coming soon to
a boss near you



Issue 1

May 2006

Back Page

What is the A.W.U?

The Autonomous Workers Union (AWU) was established in February 2005 as an alternative to highly centralised unions with hierarchical leaderships.

So, you may ask - what makes the AWU different from many other unions?

Inclusive membership coverage and low fees

The AWU is cross-sectorial; this means that we can cover a wide range of work places. If you move from one field of work to another you don't need to change unions, you can keep the friendships and support networks that you have built. Another advantage of joining the AWU is that we will cover smaller workplaces that other Unions do not. The AWU is also open for the unemployed, homeworkers, volunteer workers, students and those who can't work. The minimum membership fee is only \$1 per week so that anyone can afford to be a member.

The AWU is democratic and non-hierarchically organised

In the early 1990s the memberships of many unions voted overwhelmingly in support of a nation wide general strike in response to National's proposed labour law changes (Employment Contracts Act). Despite this, many union representatives at the National level dismissed their membership's wishes, and voted against the general strike. The AWU rejects this top-down approach to organisation. Instead we favour democratic non-hierarchical decision making, which means that members not only have the final say in important decisions that affect them, but are free to participate in the union as much as they wish. As an AWU member you are welcome to come along to our fortnightly meetings and your opinion holds as much weight as anyone else's.

What has the AWU achieved so far?

We have established working relationships with other unions and community groups on a local and national level.

We have a presence on a number of worksites in Dunedin and negotiated Collective Employment Agreements (CEAs) for our members where sufficient numbers exist on site. At the moment we are negotiating CEAs at Arc and Subway and intend to become a party to the Unite/Burger King negotiations.

We have run successful high profile campaigns against McDonalds over their treatment of workers and successfully settled a number of Personal Grievances for our members through the Department of Labour Mediation Services.

What does the future hold?

With goal of 1000 Dunedin members by the end of the year, the AWU seeks to have more members who are more actively involved. We hope to run workshops, produce information leaflets and explore other avenues that will help people to organise their own workplaces and communities. Remember this is your union and you can have a part what the future holds for both the AWU and our wider community.

AWU Editorial Coll.
Lara Searle
Malcolm Danks
Work Stanton
awu@xmail.com